

Mindfulness and the Purpose of Being in the Present

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Abstract : The secular view of mindfulness has some connotation to the original meaning of mindfulness mentioned in the Theravada Buddhist texts (Pāli Canon), but there is a substantial difference in the meaning of the two. Secular Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBI) focus on stilling the mind, which may provide short-term benefits and help individuals to deal with physical pain, grief, and distress. However, as with many popular educational innovations, the foundational values of mindfulness strategies have been distorted and subverted in a number of instances in which 'McMindfulness' programmes have been implemented with a view to reducing mindfulness meditation as a self-help technique that is easily misappropriated for the exclusive pursuit of corporate objectives, employee pacification, and commercial profit. The intention of this paper is not to critique the misappropriations of mindfulness. Instead, to go back to the root source and bring insights from the Buddhist Pāli Canon and its associated teachings on mindfulness in its own terms. In the Buddha's discourses, as preserved in the Pāli Canon, there is nothing more significant than the understanding and practice of 'Satipatthāna'. The Satipatthāna Sutta, the 'Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness,' opens with a proclamation highlighting both the purpose of this training and its methodology. The right practice of mindfulness is the gateway to understanding the Buddha's teaching. However, although this concept is widely discussed among the Dhamma practitioners, it is the least understood one of them all. The purpose of this paper is to understand deeper meaning of mindfulness as it was originally intended by the Teacher. The natural state of mind is that it wanders. It wanders into the past, the present, and the future. One's ability to hold attention to a mind object (emotion, thought, feeling, sensation, sense impression) called 'concentration'. The intentional concentration process does not lead to wisdom. However, the development of wisdom starts when the mind is calm, concentrated, and unified. The practice of insight contemplation aims at gaining a direct understanding of the real nature of phenomena. According to the Buddha's teaching, there are three basic facts of all existence: 1) impermanence (anicca in Pāli); 2) fabrication (also commonly known as suffering, unsatisfactoriness, sankhara or dukka in Pāli); 3) not-self (insubstantiality or impersonality, annatta in Pāli). The entire Buddhist doctrine is based on these three facts. The problem is our ignorance covers reality. It is not that a person sees the emptiness of them or that we try to see the emptiness of our experience by conceptually thinking that they are empty. It is an experiential outcome that happens when the cause-and-effect overrides the self-view (sakkaya dhitti), and ignorance is known as ignorance and eradicated once and for all. Therefore, the right view (samma dhitti) is the starting point of the path, not ethical conduct (sila) or samadhi (jhana). In order to develop the right view, we need to first listen to the correct Dhamma and possess Yoniso manasikara (right comprehension) to know the five aggregates as five aggregates.

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